

AFTER THE BATTLE

By WILHELM SCHULZE

The author is known to our readers from several contributions to this magazine, among them his humorous "Lt. Col. Lehrbas, P.R.O." He is one of the outstanding German newsmen in East Asia today. Mr. Schulze was recently among a small group of foreign correspondents who were offered the first chance to visit the areas conquered or peacefully included by Japan into the Co-Prosperity Sphere a little over a year ago.

In the following pages we are publishing some of the notes which he wrote during his trip. They are the vivid impressions of an experienced journalist who has trained himself immediately to observe what is important and to capture in a few words what it took days or weeks to see.—K.M.

SAIGON

SAIKON is a typical little French provincial town. With its neat houses, its tidy little shops, its attractive window displays, its sidewalk cafés, and its French people who, although they form only a tiny minority, dominate the appearance of the streets in the center of the town, Saigon radiates leisurely quiet and a European charm which can be found nowhere else in the East.

Nevertheless, although war has not touched the city directly, it has deeply affected the lives of its inhabitants. Behind the window displays yawn empty shelves, and stores which continue to do business are selling out their stocks or dealing in local goods. Behind the Frenchman who argues with the native waiter in the café over the temperature of his drink and still manages to show typical French temperament in doing this, there looms the anxiety for his livelihood tomorrow. And behind the women—and this is also a sign of the times that should not be disregarded in one's judgment of the situation—there looms the question of how their chic is to be maintained tomorrow, when a bottle of perfume (from France, of course) is only to be had on the black market for a hundred and fifty piastres.

They still drive their own cars in Saigon, and these have not been converted to the use of charcoal. But

instead they run on alcohol made from rice, and this alcohol eats away parts of the motor, so that they can just about figure out how long they will be able to enjoy the pleasure of motoring. They have no lubricating oil. But they found a way out by turning the huge catch of their fishing industry into lubricating oil. For the time being they still have enough leather, but a scarcity of tanning material is beginning to be felt.

What is still there in abundance is gold, precious stones, silk, rice, meat, and fruit. Will the French in Saigon be able to re-create, with these things and with the available abundance of native labor, that style of living for which people were willing to go out to the colonies?

Once you have touched upon these problems in conversation, even superficially, you know that your first carefree impression of this town is not necessarily the final or correct one. Banners across the width of Rue Cadinat with their appeals to patriotism, and the acknowledgment indirectly revealed by them that the citizens of Saigon are by no means united, supply further indications of the worries weighing upon the town. Outwardly, the problem De Gaulle or Pétain seems settled, since the Japanese victories in Malaya, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies have proved Pétain's policy to have been right. But

in the harbor of Saigon lies the whole French East Asiatic fleet, and no one can say what the feelings are with which the French people look upon this fleet.

Their new Japanese co-citizens, however, are looked upon with absolute legal correctness, as can be seen on every occasion. In a prolonged interview granted us by the Japanese Minister who, under Ambassador Yoshizawa, heads the diplomatic branch at Saigon, we were told that Franco-Japanese relations had been entirely settled on the basis of military, economic, and commercial agreements, which determined these relations. In the same way, every Frenchman regards Franco-Japanese relations as a purely legal affair that has been clarified and outlined.

When on arrival from the airfield we entered the dining room of the Nippon Hotel, which was formerly known as the Majestic Hotel, we were surprised at the sensation our appearance caused among the Annamite waitresses. Behind every column and every screen they stood giggling and laughing, watching us from their hiding places. At first we were apt to regard this curiosity and more than friendly interest as part of the Annamite character. But we soon found out that we were actually the first European guests of the Nippon Hotel since it had been taken over by the Japanese quite some time ago.

Except when they meet in the course of duty, they live strictly apart from one another, these Frenchmen from an earlier

period of French history and their co-citizens who have brought a new age with them. This living side by side with each other is facilitated by the fact that the Japanese have brought their own time from Tokyo and that the French have kept to their old time, which lags two hours behind that of Tokyo. When the Japanese have already finished breakfast, the French are just getting up. When the Frenchman goes to have his customary *apéritif*, the Japanese is just leaving the café to have his supper. French midnight and closing time of the restaurants find the Japanese already fast asleep on his *futong*.

What is the future that Indo-China faces? It would be presumptuous to indulge in prophecies. But a remark made by the Japanese Minister in this connection, although not applied directly to this question, deserves to be remembered. Japan's victory, he said, is the key to all events and developments in Indo-China. This victory must be complete and must have resulted in peace before Indo-China's role within the coming Greater East Asia can be determined.

There can be no doubt that this role will have to be played within Greater East Asia and never again outside of this sphere. Indo-China may still and for ever afterwards, as in her purely French past, be the only country in East Asia to drive on the right-hand side of the road; but the Japanese will see to it that, within the total area of their sphere, Indo-China drives properly.

SHONAN

While writing these lines, I am sitting on the wide terrace of the former Seaview Hotel, which the Japanese have renamed Nanmeikaku and turned into officers' quarters. In front of the open door there stretches into the darkness, faintly illuminated by a single star, the Strait of Singapore; not even the former Dutch Rhio archipelago lying opposite can be made out. A Malayan waiter wanders up and down the lawn, ready at a moment's notice to bring me tea or get me my

cigarettes. Tiny mosquitoes hover around my hands and feet. It is a typical tropic night, and we have had a hard, hot day.

This afternoon we went to see the last fortifications which the British had hurriedly constructed on the south coast of Singapore: good, strong field positions with triple barbed-wire entanglements reaching into the sea and with a few sturdy pillboxes. Once again, as so often during the last few days, we shook our heads and wondered: Why? Why at

the last moment did they have to construct fortifications towards the south of all places, when it was an absolute certainty that the enemy would approach from the north, from the land?

Several days ago we stood on the observation tower of the palace of the Sultan of Johore and looked out over the battlefield from the same spot from which General Yamashita directed the Japanese operation of crossing over to Singapore Island. Every point of the battlefield as far as the hill of Bukit Timah and the famous Ford factory where the capitulation was signed could be clearly seen from there. That was the first time we shook our heads and asked what had stopped the British from destroying the tower before they retreated from the mainland. For although they could not know with absolute certainty that General Yamashita would use it as his point of command, even the youngest British artillery officer should have been aware of the fact that this tower was a splendid vantage point for artillery observation. But no, they left it standing; and, even after the battle had begun and the crossing had started, not a single British shell landed within miles of the tower.

We drove across the famous Johore causeway, and gaps in the railing disclosed that the blasting so much talked about at that time had destroyed hardly a hundred feet of the causeway. Later, the British directed heavy fire at the causeway, and the Japanese suffered losses when they filled in the gap in forty-eight hours. But again the question arose, why the British had not blown up the whole causeway or at least a piece five or ten times as big. There could surely have been no lack of explosives.

Following the route across the island taken by the Japanese during the battle, we reached Bukit Timah Hill. A glance at a map will show even the layman that, with the loss of this position, the situation would become untenable for the British. So it was here that the battle had to be fought, that every muscle had to be

strained for defense. But today the traces of this fighting have practically disappeared. On the hill, which was doubtless bitterly defended, there is now a Japanese monument to the fallen sons of Nippon, and slightly below it a monument to fallen Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Australians. Australian prisoners of war have cleaned up the area here so that you hardly notice anything of the battle. But even the entire surroundings, which you would expect to be pock-marked with shell craters, have in reality hardly been touched.

A few miles further south, however, on Kappel Hill, the picture is still a terrible one. You need no explanations to realize that here, at the very gates of Singapore, the battle actually raged in the true sense of the word and that the defenders really fought here—when it was already much too late to save the island fortress. All the reserves which were saved up at Bukit Timah or sent too late had to shed their blood here when there was no longer the slightest chance of their sacrifices having any meaning. Why? This question arose over and over again.

It grew to almost terrifying proportions when we went to see Seletar, the actual British naval port. The generosity of the Japanese allowed us to inspect it in all its details, perhaps to show us that Seletar was in reality only a third-rate base and that all the British claims about the strength of this base had been nothing but bluff. It is true that, before their retreat, the British damaged the drydock, sank the floating dock, and demolished the giant crane that could lift 250 tons. But when the Japanese approached the naval port they evacuated it without fighting. Vast storehouses, warehouses, and workshops with steel presses and all kinds of other modern machinery fell undamaged into Japanese hands; and, since the Japanese themselves had, in the hope of entering it soon, spared the naval port as much as possible and hardly bombed it, the Japanese fleet could enter it a few days after the cessation of hostilities. The drydock has long been func-

tioning again, and the floating dock, too, will soon be in use once more.

Last but not least in this series of "why's" come those raised by the sight of the prisoners of war, whom we meet at every step. The Japanese allow them to go about freely, so to speak. There is no escape for them, even if they should plan to escape. But in no face could we read the desire for flight. In spite of all Eden's propaganda it can be said, for the consolation of English, Scottish, and Australian mothers, wives, and sweethearts, that not only do they look very well fed and healthy, but that they are obviously quite content with their lot. For reasons of comfort they dress only in hat, shorts, and boots. Even without the proffered cigarettes, we could have easily drawn them into conversation. But the question as to "why" would certainly not have been answered correctly by them. There had been more than a hundred thousand of them opposing a bare thirty thousand Japanese. They had been strong and healthy, well equipped and carefully trained. Why should they feel inclined today to give the correct answer to the question?

I do not even know whether I shall be able to give the proper answer, although I feel that I know it. It is certainly to be found in part in the British underestimation of the enemy and also in part in their confidence of being able later to make up for possible early losses. Certainly another part of the answer is to be found in the differences of opinion between the British Army and the British Navy which, according to Japanese observation, were never properly co-ordinated. Undoubtedly, the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* had a demoralizing effect on the British Navy; and the flight of the remaining British fleet from Seletar, even before the actual battle for Singapore had begun, in turn deeply affected the morale of the British Army. But all this does not explain the British actions, the British defeat, and the British collapse, just as the poor quality of the British command in the actual fighting does not sufficiently explain everything, although this command was a rank disgrace.

I believe that the answer to all these "why's" must be sought elsewhere, and I think I found it several nights ago when I went in search of a cold bottle of beer and landed in the Singapore Swimming Club. This is a place that is hardly surpassed anywhere in the world. It is worthy of those vast palaces of commerce which, in the center of Singapore, form such a monstrous contrast to the cruel poverty of their surroundings. It is a token of English luxury such as cannot be found better or more impressive even in London. Designed in complete harmony and in a setting of exquisite beauty, the buildings and the pool have a dreamlike, almost unbearable loveliness.

Those who have seen this swimming club must regard it as the crowning achievement of British wealth in Singapore and must admit with envy that its members knew how to live well. But they did not know how to die, and they never grasped that one must be able to die in order to win life. They fought as they used to play, and it never occurred to them that total war could be anything but good sport. And, starting with them, thousands of troops whom they commanded knew even less why they should let themselves be killed by the Japanese. This is true above all for the Indians and Malaysians under British command. But this is at least equally true, although in a somewhat different form, for the Australian "Diggers," for the London "Cockneys," and for the Scottish "Highlanders," who were never allowed to enter the Swimming Club.

There may have been many individual brave soldiers in the British Army. But if the leadership was inadequate, bad, or even abominable, the entire army was at least in the same degree uninterested, indifferent, or intent on staying alive. What did England, the Empire, and what, after all, did Singapore matter? That must have been more or less the attitude of English, Scottish and, above all, Australian soldiers. To this day the surviving officers and men in their robust health have not grasped that with Singapore they lost more than a fortress, a colony, or even an empire.

BELAWAN-DELI

Yesterday afternoon we landed in Medan. In contrast to the traditional notion of Sumatra and the cannibals which inhabited it until a hundred years ago, we found Medan to be a clean, comfortable little town whose hotel and streets, even its Chinese quarter and pleasure parks, still radiated typical Dutch cleanliness.

The motorcar that took us this morning through streets with rows of gray-painted houses—incidentally, this was the only defense measure taken by the Dutch up to the occupation, although they had more than two months' time after the outbreak of war—soon turned towards the suburbs and ended its journey of some twelve miles in front of a plain, unadorned wooden shed. Inside this shed, a young lieutenant began by showing us some photographs. One photo showed a quay more than half a mile long which was torn open everywhere by blastings. Another photo showed a battery of palm-oil tanks, perhaps several dozen at various places, but all of them completely burnt out. Photos of sunk ships followed upon photos of burnt-down warehouses. Blown-up railway yards rounded off the impression of the whole: namely, that the Dutch, before evacuating Belawan-Deli, had really destroyed everything that could be of use to the Japanese. After having seen all these photographs I can well imagine that the Dutch were convinced that they had rendered this port useless to the Japanese for at least five years. Incidentally, one third of the entire imports and exports of Sumatra passed through here before the war.

But, impressive as were the photos, the gesture with which the young Japanese lieutenant opened the door of the shed to expose the port of Belawan-Deli as it is today was equally impressive. Before

our eyes stretched the quay as far as it had ever stretched, bordered on one side by the river and on the other by warehouses, railroad tracks, and pipe lines. In the river we could still discern a few wrecks, for the Dutch sank almost 80,000 tons of shipping here. But the shipping channel wound its broad, unimpeded way through the few remaining obstacles. We were taken through the tank installations, and only military necessity forbids us to say how many of the 92 destroyed tanks have been filled with palm oil again.

We saw a sawmill that answered all the requirements of our Japanese lieutenant; we saw a small drydock that he had hauled out of the water again and which now held two Chinese junks; and we finally saw the bathhouse built by the Japanese for the native workmen and of which the Dutch, in spite of their cleanliness, had never thought. Everything was permeated by the noise of happy labor. The atmosphere was almost like that of a fair among the crowding, hurrying, and yet laughing workmen.

I have had dozens of opportunities to see Japanese reconstruction work in detail, in large things as in small. But the impression made upon me by the work of that young Japanese lieutenant in Belawan-Deli was not approached even by Djawa. Nowhere else has the will for reconstruction triumphed so unequivocally over the will for destruction. No more drastic effect can be imagined than for the Japanese to let that Dutchman who was responsible for the work of destruction see Belawan-Deli as it is today. I should like to see the surprise in his face when he realizes for how few months he has been able to hold up the Japanese in their economic progress, when he had believed to have stopped them once and for all from using this port.

DJAWA

To the best of my knowledge I can state that, in the months before the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War, the

Japanese were far removed from the thought of pocketing the Dutch colonial empire. They would have been more

than satisfied if Indonesia, as a geographical part of East Asia, had been at their disposal, as it was at that of the Dutch, the British, and the Americans, as a supplier, and if they, like the Dutch, the British, and the Americans, had been allowed to acquire some of its wealth in rubber, oil, etc., on a normal commercial basis. Before the war the Japanese sent to Batavia, first the Minister of Commerce Kobayashi and, after the failure of his mission, the old, experienced diplomat Yoshizawa. At this stage of East Asiatic politics, the Japanese would certainly not have quibbled over money and the prices for Indonesian products. They would have accepted any conditions, as long as the Netherlands East Indies had only supplied.

But to recapitulate in a few words: The Dutch, who had once been in dread as to whether England or America would be the first to swallow them, had at this juncture already once and for all gambled away their fate. In the present world conflict, they had definitely staked their all on the Anglo-American card and were no longer the masters of their decisions. They let, first Kobayashi, then Yoshizawa, go home without any results. They went over with all they had to the "ABCD" front. And even after the Greater East Asia War had already started, they laughed at the final Japanese offer to ensure their existence by maintaining neutrality. They had the reputation of being shrewd businessmen, and their calculations must have led them to the conviction that Japan could never win a war against England and America. And this is where they proved themselves to be poor calculators.

But they were not only poor calculators: they were real gamblers; for, in joining the "ABCD" front they must have believed that this act was all that was necessary for safeguarding their country. During the last few days I have traveled by car all over Djawa. I have had all the battles fought on Djawa explained to me by Japanese officers. I have inspected all the defense positions prepared by the Dutch. The

result is devastating. I can only state that the Dutch made nothing but the very slightest efforts on their own part to face a possible enemy and ward him off. This they seemed to regard as a job for the Anglo-Saxons.

I have seen the defense system of Surabaya, and I was told the course of the battle by a young Japanese lieutenant who participated in it. In a terrain that actually offered excellent possibilities for defense, there were a few dozen weak, unconnected pillboxes which were protected only by a narrow river. During my inspection, there were some Japanese troops practising attacks on old, ruined pillboxes, and little imagination was needed to conjure up the past reality. "When we had just got that far," observed the young lieutenant with a gesture towards the maneuvering troops, "a Dutch flag of truce appeared and saved us further trouble."

Starting from the airfield of Kalidjati, where the final capitulation of the Dutch troops was signed in the plain, sturdy house of the chief flying instructor after only eight days of fighting, I visited the battlefield between Bandoeng and Batavia. High, dominating hills should have given the Dutch the opportunity of holding out for weeks. And indeed, as is to be seen from trenches dug by the Japanese in front of the Dutch positions, there was comparatively severe fighting at some places. But the battle was lost. Why?

At first, when the Dutch heard that the Japanese had landed on the west coast of Djawa, they concentrated their main forces there. When the second landing in central Djawa near Kalidjati was reported, the Dutch hurriedly regrouped their forces. And finally, when the Japanese who had landed at Kalidjati began to attack, they took this to be the main battle, although the Japanese were far outnumbered, and held up their hands as soon as the Dutch tanks had been destroyed by Japanese planes. Actual fighting between infantry troops took place in Djawa only sporadically, by chance, so to speak, and never according to plan or decisively.

Before the outbreak of the war, the Japanese would have been glad to give even future Dutch generations an opportunity to enjoy the wealth of Djawa. They would doubtless have taken into the bargain the fact that Netherlands would have continued to live in the beautiful towns of Djawa for an unlimited period, if the Dutch East Indies had only shown the least inclination to meet Japanese commercial and economic desires halfway. At the beginning of the Greater East Asia War things were already difficult enough for the Japanese even without the participation of the Netherlands East Indies. The Japanese had no reason to make it more difficult by forcing Holland to take part. But Dutch obstinacy and selfishness frustrated this solution, and today there is surely no one in the world who regards the fall of the Netherlands East Indies as being more final and who has struck out more definitely on new paths in the administration of Djawa than the Japanese occupation troops. From the head of the military administration down to the simplest private, no one thinks of Djawa as an "occupied area." The conviction that Djawa has definitely become a part of the Co-Prosperity Sphere is such a matter of course that temporary measures such as are still necessary elsewhere in Japanese occupied areas are not even considered here.

Of course, the solid foundation laid by the Dutch in their administration and the fact that the natives really desire to cooperate with Japan for the future, have facilitated the work of reconstruction in those districts and economic areas which have been affected by the war—and there are not many of them. On principle, the Dutch in their work of destruction spared residential quarters, so that the Japanese administration has no worries regarding housing, feeding, and employment. The Dutch brought factories to a standstill by

making them useless through carrying away important parts of machinery. But these factories are working again today, as I saw for myself. The Japanese provincial governor of Surabaya told me that all of them were running again three months after Djawa had been occupied, for the native workmen brought back the hidden parts of machinery, disclosing the hiding places in their own interests.

Indeed, in dozens of cases the factories are today once more under the old Dutch management, the only difference being that the Dutchmen now wear armbands with the Rising Sun and that important decisions must be okayed by the Japanese supervisor. In the former *Hôtel des Indes* in Batavia, which has lost none of its beauty through the war, a Dutchman asked me to remember him to a mutual acquaintance in Tokyo. When I in turn asked from whom the message was, he replied with an embarrassed smile: "From the former manager of this hotel." The word "former" held everything that was to be said.

Since May of last year, the Japanese army in Djawa has been feeding and clothing itself from the country's products and has been receiving no supplies whatever from Japan. Since May of last year, the traces of war have been systematically obliterated, so that a traveler already has difficulty in finding them.

Personally, I shall always remember the wide avenue in front of the Governor's Palace in the world-famous botanical gardens at Buitenzorg, where two ancient cannons from the seventeenth century are mounted, as if they were to protect all the wealth and beauty of this country. These two cannons have gradually taken on a symbolic character for me during this journey. At any rate, they do not seem suitable guardians for a paradise.

For that one must look for better protection, even if it should be more costly than two old souvenir cannons.

